

REMARKS

Applicants reply to the Office Action dated April 25, 2005, within the shortened three-month statutory period for reply. Claims 1-26, 28, 30 and 32 were pending in the application and the Examiner rejects claims 1-26, 28, 30 and 32. Support for the amendments may be found in the originally-filed specification, claims, and figures. No new matter has been introduced by these amendments. Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejects claims 1-26, 28, 30 and 32 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Taufique, WO 01/20518 A1 (“Taufique”) in view of Lauffer, U.S. Patent No. 6,223,165 B1 (“Lauffer”), and in further view of DeLorme et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,948,040 (“DeLorme”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Taufique generally discloses a system for providing communication between experts and end-users over a network. Taufique teaches a system including a database where experts and expert credentials may be stored. An end-user interfacing with the system may enter a question which is then used to search the database in order to identify an expert possessing expertise relating to the question. The Taufique system then routes the question to the identified expert, and when answered, the question and answer are stored in a database. A different end-user subsequently submitting a similar question would then be issued a previously-stored answer from the database, thereby bypassing the step of transmitting the question to the expert to again answer.

Taufique is limited to a unique configuration of a “help” utility as is frequently employed in current web sites. Many product web sites offer their customers several options for obtaining help which may include, for example, a frequently asked questions web page, a knowledge base and a live help link. A frequently asked questions (FAQ) web page is usually compiled from a database of previously asked and answered questions. This usually requires an end-user to review a list of questions to find one similar to their own. A knowledge base is very similar to a FAQ, although it usually requires the end-user to enter a specific question which is used to automatically conduct a database search for similar questions which have been previously answered. Live help, on the other hand, provides direct communication between an end-user and a representative of the company. Communication between the end-user and the representative is usually conducted through a live exchange of text messages. Taufique combines the knowledge

base and live help concepts to teach a system wherein a question is first compared with a number of questions in a database, and if a similar question is found, the corresponding answer is returned to the end-user. If a similar question is not found, the question is forwarded to a representative who may attempt to answer the question.

Because the Taufique system saves only questions and answers to a database, there would be no way of determining who originally submitted the question. Moreover, Taufique does not include saving information relating to the end-user which would be useful to determine the adequacy of the system, track demographic data regarding end-users, and create and target marketing campaigns. As such, Taufique does not disclose or suggest at least "associating said customer data with said destination question data and storing said association in said answer database," as similarly recited by independent claims 1, 8, 13 and 20.

Applicants assert that Claims 1-26, 28, 30 and 32 are differentiated from Lauffer and DeLorme for at least the same reasons as presented above in reference to Taufique. Moreover, the Examiner correctly asserts that Taufique "fails to expressly disclose providing expert advice related to travel" (page 3, 7).

Dependent claims 2-7, 9-12, 14-19, 21-26, 28, 30 and 32 depend from independent claims 1, 8, 13 and 20. As such, dependent claims 2-7, 9-12, 14-19, 21-26, 28, 30 and 32 are allowable for at least the reasons described above with respect to independent claims 1, 8, 13 and 20, as well as in view of their own respective features.

In view of the above remarks and amendments, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims properly set forth that which Applicants regard as their invention and are allowable over the cited references. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the Examiner's convenience, if that would help further prosecution of the subject Application. Applicants authorize and respectfully request that any fees due be charged to Deposit Account No. 19-2814.

Dated: 6/1/08

Respectfully submitted,

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